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Kuo-wen KUO

Hsiang-yi YEH

Ph.D. Candidate, Graduate Institute of Political Economy, National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan

THE U.S. – JAPAN ALLIANCE AND ASIA-PACIFIC SECURITY: IMPLICATIONS FOR JAPAN-TAIWAN RELATIONS

The end of the Cold War has brought tremendous changes in the international system. In Asia, the most significant change has been the rise of China. Faced with China's rapid economic growth and increased military threat, the United States has shifted its strategic focus to the Asia-Pacific region, strengthening defense cooperation with Japan. The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan was initially a Cold War alliance to combat the threat of the Soviet Union. Due to its strategic position, Taiwan is a crucial part of the Western Pacific for the United States. For Japan, Taiwan is "Japan's lifeline," and is a major unspoken factor in Japan's security policy considerations. Does security and stability in the Taiwan Strait influence trade and development and overall military balance in the wider Asia-Pacific region? This study looks at changes in security in the Taiwan Strait and Taiwan-Japan relations through the evolution of the U.S. – Japan Security Treaty.

Keywords: *Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan, security in the Taiwan Strait, Taiwan-Japan relations*

Introduction

East Asia has seen dramatic changes over the seventy years from the end of the Second World War, through the Cold War and post-Cold War period, involving changing patterns of inter-state cooperation or conflict. In the context of these changes, the U.S. – Japan relationship has remained relatively stable. However, with the rise of China, this relationship has also evolved, primarily through several redefinitions of the U.S. – Japan Security Treaty. These changes have reflected the new position of the United States in East Asia, and have challenged

China's attempts to expand its regional power. However, these changes have also affected relations between Japan and Taiwan. Under the redefined U.S. – Japan Security Treaty, the two sides have developed a mutually beneficial relationship. This study uses a macro perspective to assess whether the U.S. – Japan security system may benefit cross-Straits relations, and whether it can provide an additional layer of protection for Taiwan's security. These two important questions are the focus of this study.

Evolution of the U.S. – Japan Security System

It is now more than sixty years since the signing of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan (U.S. – Japan Security Treaty) in 1951. Based on economic considerations and the equal status of the two powers, as well as national interests and challenges, four major reforms to the Treaty have been made: revisions to the Security Treaty in 1960, the Guidelines for U.S. – Japan Defense Cooperation of 1978, the U.S. – Japan Joint Declaration on Security: Alliance for the 21st Century of 1996, and the New Guidelines for U.S. – Japan Defense Cooperation of 1997. Looking at the birth of the Security Treaty and its four major reforms, each change occurred with a specific context closely related to the security situation in the Asia-Pacific region. In the section below, we discuss the content of the U.S. – Japan Security Treaty in different periods and its relationship to regional security.

1960-1970: U.S. Leadership

The U.S. – Japan Security Treaty was signed in response to the international situation of the time. After the Second World War, in order to prevent the reemergence of Japanese militarism, the allies wrote Article 9 of the Japanese constitution renouncing war, maintaining an army, navy, or air force, and the right to belligerency. However, with the outbreak of the Korean War, U.S. policy towards Japan changed. The U.S. now viewed Japan as a base to contain the expansion of Communism in Asia.

The U.S. – Japan Security Treaty was signed in 1951. The content of the treaty can be interpreted as follows: Japan has disarmed and can no longer exercise the right to self-defense. In addition, militarism still persisted in Japan, which remained a potential threat. Therefore, Japan signed a security treaty with the United States allowing American forces to be stationed in Japan

to prevent a military attack against Japan and provide a temporary solution for the country's defense. The treaty provided legal basis for U.S. troops to station in Japan. Therefore, aside from preventing the reemergence of Japanese militarism, the U.S. – Japan Security Treaty also prevented Communism aggression in the Far East threatening regional peace and security.

However, there were many inequalities in the 1951 U.S. – Japan Security Treaty and U.S. – Japan Administrative Agreement, including a lack of autonomy on the use of military facilities and armaments, and exclusive American use of former imperial Japanese military facilities. Japan was forced to pay some of the costs of stationing American forces in the country. In addition, American military personnel and their families enjoyed exemption from tax and extraterritoriality. Therefore, U.S. – Japan relations under the 1951 Security Treaty can be viewed as de-facto extension of the American occupation.

Unequal U.S. – Japan relations and anxiety about Japan becoming dragged into the Cold War conflict produced opposition in Japan toward the Security Treaty. However, then Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida put priority on economic reconstruction of the war-torn economy, and advocated establishing small self-defense forces, while relying on U.S. military power. Yoshida saw that Japan's postwar economic recovery was slow, and believed that the political and economic benefits of the Security Treaty were to be greater than military concessions. Therefore, in order to obtain more economic aid and technology transfers from the United States, and to enable Japan to pursue economic development under American protection and rejoin international society, Japan had no option but to accept the conditions set forth by the United States.¹

However, even though the United States provided military and economic assistance, in the 1950s, Japan had only a 75,000 strong police force, which in military terms was woefully insufficient for self-defense. In addition, the U.S. – Japan Security Treaty contained no contingency mechanism for the U.S. military or United Nations in the event that Japan was subject to attack. In addition to a lack of clear provisions for mutual assistance, in the event of large-scale domestic disturbances, the Japanese government still had to request the assistance of the United States, making it impossible to respond quickly to critical situations. Therefore, a sense of insecurity in both national defense and internal affairs had an adverse effect on Japan's economic recovery.

In 1957, during a meeting between U.S. president Dwight D.

Eisenhower and Japanese Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, both sides agreed they should establish new cooperative relations for the new era, and should therefore review the then-existing security treaty arrangement. After several rounds of negotiation, the new Security Treaty was signed in 1960. The new Security Treaty gave Japan a significantly enhanced role as well as greater autonomy.

The new treaty refers to the rights of collective self-defense in Article 51 of the United Nations Charter as its legal basis. In addition, it covered U.S. and Japanese political and economic relations, not limited to military ones. Also, U.S. defense zone under the treaty is no longer limited to Japan, and is expanded to cover the Far East.

Overall, Japan’s defense policy in the 1950s under the U.S. – Japan Security Treaty followed “exclusive defense” as the basic principle of security. Despite not assuming responsibility for regional security, Japan was able to rely on U.S. defense commitment. This ensured that Japan’s political and economic relations in East Asia would remain undamaged, while also not jeopardizing the incumbent domestic ruling elite established through a political consensus between the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) factions and the priority given to economic development.²

Table 1 Comparison between the 1951 and 1960 U.S. – Japan Security Treaty

Similarities	Differences
1. Based on the principle of protecting Japan’s independence and security.	1. The new treaty stresses that the content of the treaty must be consistent with the provision of the UN Charter. Japan had not yet entered the UN when the old treaty was signed, so the old treaty does not mention UN provisions.
2. The U.S. military as the main agent for protecting Japan’s national security.	2. The new treaty stresses political and economic relations, while the old treaty states that Japan invites the U.S. to station its troops in the country to meet its defense needs.

3. Consent is given to the U.S. to use bases and facilities within Japan.	3. In the new treaty, Japan has the right to fight against foreign aggression alongside the U.S.; the old treaty only states that the U.S. must protect Japan.
4. By signing the treaty, the U.S. hopes that Japan will become a stabilizing force in Asia.	4. The new treaty removes the provision for the U.S. military to suppress civil strife in Japan.
	5. In the old treaty, the U.S. has full rights to carry out military operations. The new treaty gives Japan the right to a say in U.S. military operations.
	6. The new treaty clearly stipulates a ten-year term.
	7. The new treaty includes provisions for maintaining peace and security in the Far East, while the defensive scope of the old treaty is confined to Japan.

Source: Shao-hsien Chu. 1970. "U.S. – Japan Security Treaty and Japan's Defense," *Issues and Studies* 9, 9: 39-40 (in Chinese).

1970-1990: Regional Cooperation and Mutual Defense

After the signing of the new U.S. – Japan Security Treaty in 1960, Japan focused its efforts on national economic development under the U.S. – Japan security system. However by the 1970s, changes in the international situation had also changed the relationship between the two countries.

In the late 1960s, newly elected President Richard M. Nixon pointed out that the United States spent hundreds of billions of dollars funding the Vietnam War, having dissipated American power. At the same time, Soviet military power became rapidly stronger, posing a threat to America's global security strategy. Nixon believed that in order to get out of the quagmire in the Vietnam War, the rapprochement with the People's Republic of China was necessary. Therefore, after his inauguration, Nixon took steps to improve the relationship between the U.S. and Beijing. While he still regarded Beijing as a "potential enemy," he believed that the main threat to American global interests came from Moscow rather than Beijing.³

In July 1969, President Nixon put forth the famous Nixon Doctrine during a conference in Guam. The doctrine clearly stated that the United States would concentrate its forces in Europe and the Middle East to resist Soviet military power, and carry out a strategic withdrawal from the Asia-Pacific region. As a result, Japan and other allies in the Asia-Pacific region were asked to take more responsibility for their own defense. In the future, U.S. foreign policy, whether it is in Asia or elsewhere, would involve less intervention.

In addition, the worsening Sino-Soviet conflict made Beijing realize that the Soviet Union rather than the United States posed greater threat to its national security. Therefore, adopting a friendlier stance toward the United States would allow China to focus its efforts against the Soviet threat, while also guarding against the risk of the United States allying with the Soviet Union against China. Faced with the threat of Soviet hegemony, China pursued active cooperation with the United States and Japan through the Shanghai Communiqué of 1972 and the Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Japan.

The most obvious change in U.S. – Japan relations in the 1970s was the signing of the bilateral Guidelines for U.S. – Japan Defense Cooperation in 1978 based on the principle that Japan would only use its military to defend its territory. The Guidelines stated that should Japan come under attack, the two countries should jointly take effective action. In peacetime, the two sides should work together and ensure required defense postures in the areas of operations, intelligence, and logistical support. In the case of a contingency in the Far East that affects Japan's security, Japan should provide relevant assistance for the activities of U.S. forces based on the U.S. – Japan Security Treaty.⁴

The U.S. – Japan Security Treaty and the 1978 Guidelines for U.S. – Japan Defense Cooperation were the basis of the comprehensive U.S. – Japan security treaty system, serving as the cornerstone of U.S. defense policy in the Asia-Pacific region. Before the end of the Cold War, Soviet expansion was jointly checked by the United States, Japan, and China. The bilateral system therefore reached the level of regional cooperation, and was crucial to maintaining peace and security in Northeast Asia as well as elevating Japan's international status.

1990s: Deepening Cooperation, Shared Responsibility for Security and Defense in the Asia-Pacific

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Cold War pattern of U.S.-Soviet

conflict came to an end. However, in the post-Cold War period, the U.S. security strategy in the Asia-Pacific still centered on the U.S. – Japan security system. Former U.S. president George H. W. Bush stressed the importance of U.S. – Japanese military cooperation, asking Japan to share responsibility for security and defense in the Asia-Pacific region, and stressing bilateral cooperation and exchanges of military technology.

In 1989, President Bush issued a joint statement in Washington affirming the importance of the U.S. – Japan Security System to peace in the Asia-Pacific, and stating that the United States and Japan would be engaged in close security cooperation to secure peace and security in the Asia-Pacific.⁵

In 1991, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker described the strategic security relations between the United States and its allies in the Asia-Pacific as a hub and spokes structure, with the U.S. – Japan security alliance as the center fold in bilateral relations between the United States and its regional allies.⁶ This was the famous “fan-spread theory” of U.S. policy in the Asia-Pacific region centered on the U.S. – Japan security relationship. The strategic forward deployment of U.S. forces in the Asia-Pacific was based on the U.S. – Japan security alliance.

In 1995, the U.S. Department of Defense announced the “United States Security Strategy for the East Asia Pacific Region.” This report stressed the importance of U.S. – Japan relations as the basis for Asia-Pacific security and the global strategy of the United States.¹ In the same year, Japan also published a revised “National Defense Program Outline.” Aside from expressing a willingness to strengthen cooperation with the United States, it also conformed to the “United States Security Strategy for the East Asia Pacific Region,” confirming the importance of the U.S. – Japan security system.

In 1996, Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto and U.S. President Bill Clinton agreed to re-examine the 1978 Guidelines for U.S. – Japan Defense Cooperation. After more than a year of coordination and consultation, in 1997 the two sides signed new Guidelines for U.S. – Japan Defense Cooperation. The new Guidelines stressed military cooperation between the two sides under ordinary circumstances, as well as maintain the security of the Asia-Pacific region surrounding Japan. The agreement also stressed political and economic cooperation, as well as global security cooperation, primarily as a defense against China and North Korea.

1 *United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, February 1995).

In addition, the new Guidelines, were based on joint U.S. – Japan military action in response to “situations in areas surrounding Japan” that have an important influence on Japan’s security, rather than the “Far East” as the geographically defined scope of cooperation.⁷

During the Cold War, the U.S. – Japan security system was a part of the U.S. global containment strategy. After the end of the Cold War, the security system became an important mechanism for the United States to maintain regional security. The role of Japan under the new security system evolved from providing bases to the U.S. military for forward deployment to providing logistical support for U.S. military action. After the signing of the new Guidelines in 1997, the U.S. – Japan security system has become a basis for the expansion of Japan’s role and scope of activities in the Asia-Pacific region, naturally causing discontent in China as the other major power in Northeast Asia.

After 2000: U.S.–Japan Mutual Defense

The two countries gained more space to develop security cooperation after the 9.11 terrorist attack of 2001. Japan was now able to relax domestic legal restrictions on its military, and provide various types of support to the United States in its War on Terror. In 2005, the two countries convened the U.S. – Japan Security Consultative Committee, which set the future direction for the alliance. As a result, the U.S. – Japan security relationship increasingly became to have a mechanism for extra-regional security cooperation outside of the Far East that the bilateral security treaty assumed.

In 2001, Junichiro Koizumi made his first visit to the United States after taking office. Koizumi’s foreign policy reflected a mentality of “leaving Asia for America,” and constantly reiterated the importance of the U.S. – Japan alliance for Japan’s national security. Koizumi also argued that it was necessary to first ensure a good relationship with the United States in order to placate relations with other countries. On the American side, President George W. Bush constantly reiterated the importance of bilateral relations between the United States and Japan, while describing Japan as “the United States’ most important ally in the Asia-Pacific.” In this meeting of leaders, both the United States and Japan emphasized the importance of the other side in their own security policy⁸

In 2001, the Japanese Diet passed three special legal measures with a two-year validity: the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law, amendments to

the Japan Maritime Safety Agency Establishment Law, and amendments to the Self-Defense Forces Law. These three laws provided the legal basis for the deployment of the self-defense forces overseas in times of war. However, the text clearly states that parliamentary approval was required to dispatch troops overseas. After the passage of these three laws, Japan immediately dispatched naval vessels to the Indian Ocean providing logistical support to American forces in their fight against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. The scope of cooperation between the United States and Japan therefore expanded from the areas surrounding Japan to the Indian Ocean. Therefore, aside from providing a legal basis for the actions of the Self-Defense Forces, the Antiterrorism Special Measures Law also allowed Japan's military to expand the scope of its activities.⁹

In Japan's Self-Defense White Paper of 2002, it is not difficult to find evidence of the influence of the United States in the development of Japanese security policy. In particular, with the increasingly serious North Korean situation and the continuing rise of Chinese power, ensuring that the United States remains engaged in the region and maintaining the effective operation of the U.S. – Japan security system will have an enormous impact on Japan's future security. Therefore, enhancing the U.S. – Japan security system and establishing specific cooperation mechanisms is not only about Japan's national security, but also involves future regional stability. Furthermore, the White Paper also sets out policy for elevating the Japanese Defense Agency to a full cabinet-level ministry, gradually moving towards the goal of normalizing Japan's position in the international system.¹⁰

To support the U.S.-led War on Terror, in 2003 the Diet passed the Law Concerning Measures to Ensure National Independence and Security in a Situation of Armed Attack, amendments to the Self-Defense Forces Act, and amendments to the Establishment of the Security Council Act, establishing the basic principles and postures adopted by Japan in the event of an attack against the country, and ensuring the Self-Defense Forces are able to take necessary timely response measures. These reforms created a crisis management mechanism as well as legal basis for providing military support for U.S. military operation.

Therefore, it is clear that the development of Japan's security policy has gradually overcome the previous strict restrictions, and allowed for strengthened military cooperation with the United States. The strengthened mechanisms for bilateral security cooperation have further enhanced the

functions of the alliance between the two countries. Cooperation between the two countries has focused on crucial areas such as the exchange of intelligence, policy coordination and communication, joint military training, and increased exchange in military equipment and technology.¹¹

The U.S. – Japan Security System and China-Japan Relations

China-Japan Relations during the Cold War Period

Traditionally, due to the deep influence of the international environment and domestic political factors, Japanese foreign policy has tended to adopt a cautious, passive, and pragmatic attitude. During the Cold War, this attitude was particularly apparent. With the emergence of the Cold War bipolar system, Japan followed the lead of the U.S. both politically and militarily in the struggle against the Soviet-led communist camp. This established the position of Japan as an important part of the strategy to contain China and other communist countries.

In the late 1960s, Sino-Soviet relations deteriorated, prompting China and the United States to reconcile their differences. As the international situation changed, Japan also sought to improve relations with China. According to Japanese Prime Minister Kakuei Tanaka, aside from the U.S. – Japan security system, Japan also needed friendly relations with China.

In 1978, Japanese Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda signed the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between Japan and the People's Republic of China with China, which included an "antihegemony clause" desired by China, while also setting aside the Diaoyutai/Senkaku Islands dispute. In addition, the two sides committed to developing bilateral relations on the basis of friendship and mutual benefit.¹² Therefore, during the Cold War period, Japan's enemy was the Soviet Union rather than communist China. In fact, China was an expedient partner in Japan's fight against the Soviet Union.

However, with the end of the Cold War, the external conditions of Sino-Japanese relations began to change. With the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russian military threat in Northeast Asia diminished, meaning China and Japan no longer had a common strategic interest. Faced with the restructuring of the political, economic, and security situation in the region, China and Japan also began to reconsider their bilateral relations.

China-Japan Relations during the Post-Cold War Period

After the end of the Cold War, bilateral relations remained essentially good. However, between 1995 and 1996, China conducted three missile tests in the Taiwan Strait, threatening Taiwan militarily. In 1996, the United States and Japan published the U.S. – Japan Joint Declaration on Security: Alliance for the 21st Century. After the United States and Japan signed the new Guidelines for U.S. – Japan Defense Cooperation, Sino-Japanese relations began to undergo subtle changes.

Less than a month after the end of the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, the United States and Japan began to discuss revisions to the Guidelines for U.S. – Japan Defense Cooperation, and in 1996 the two sides published the U.S. – Japan Joint Declaration on Security: Alliance for the 21st Century. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs soon after issued a statement stating that China was willing to strengthen cooperation with Japan and the United States on the basis of peaceful cooperation in order to facilitate peace in the region and the world. China warned that the U.S. – Japan Security Treaty should not exceed its bilateral scope, otherwise it would produce complications in the region. In addition, the statement emphasized that Taiwan issue was China's internal affair, and opposed any country interfering in China's internal affairs.¹³

In 1997 the United States and Japan signed new Guidelines for U.S. – Japan Defense Cooperation. In response to these new Guidelines, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that U.S. – Japan security cooperation is a bilateral arrangement formed under a specific historical context, and that this arrangement should be strictly limited to a bilateral scope in order not to cause anxiety to neighboring countries in Asia or complicate the regional situation.¹⁴ China also argued that the Guidelines for U.S. – Japan Defense Cooperation clearly exceeded the framework set out in the U.S. – Japan Security Treaty. The role of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces had expanded significantly, and there was an attempt to include Taiwan within the scope of defense cooperation. In addition, defining the scope of defense as situations in areas surrounding Japan "was a matter of concern to Beijing as it posed a greater threat than a geographical definition.

In the 21st century, China has enjoyed rising military and trading power, altering the Cold War power structure in the Asia-Pacific region, and even leading to the emergence of the "China threat" thesis. Therefore, in the post-Cold War period, aside from competing with the United States in trade,

militarily Japan and the United States have developed a closer and more equal military alliance, and have established the U.S. – Japan military alliance as a major pillar for regional security. However, from a broader perspective, issues such as China’s massive market, security on the Korean peninsula, and Japan’s attempts to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council all require the support of China. Therefore, Japan must also carefully consider the potential issues created by the U.S. – Japan alliance.

When dealing with Northeast Asian security affairs, although Japan’s basic position remains the military alliance with the United States, politically speaking Japan has tried to use diplomatic and economic means to achieve friendly relations with Beijing.

In terms of U.S. – Japan relations, China is still most concerned about the Taiwan issue, and has even requested that Japan explicitly state that the U.S. – Japan security system does not include Taiwan. However, Japan has continued to pursue policy of ambiguity within the scope of the U.S. – Japan security system, since an acknowledgement that the U.S. – Japan security system excludes Taiwan may mislead China, encouraging it to use force to resolve the Taiwan issue. Japan is not willing to see the emergence of a powerful and unified China on its doorstep.

Taiwan-Japan Interactions and Security in the Taiwan Strait under the U.S. – Japan Security System

Taiwan’s democratization is consistent with American political values, and is therefore key to strengthening the U.S. security commitment in the Taiwan Strait. As a result, the United States and Japan have used their strategic alliance to intervene in the Taiwan Strait in order to maintain “peace and security.” However, China is also not willing to sit back and watch itself be surrounded by the United States and Japan, and has warned Japan not to become involved in the Taiwan issue. Therefore, whether the U.S. – Japan security system to be extended to include Taiwan will have an important strategic effect in the Asia-Pacific region, subject to the influence of the mutual interaction between the United States, China, and Taiwan.

Unlike the NATO region, the Asia-Pacific lacks a system of collective security. Furthermore, Taiwan is also not a member of the United Nations. Therefore, in the event of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait, the U.S. – Japan security system is the only mechanism that can provide a timely solution. During the

1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, the United States dispatched two aircraft carriers to waters near Taiwan. This sent a powerful message both to Beijing and also to American regional allies that the United States would keep its promise to maintain regional peace and stability. The United States maintained its “one China” policy, but also stated that the cross-Strait issue should be resolved using peaceful means.

Therefore, there were no structural changes in U.S. security policy in the Asia Pacific after the end of the Cold War. The policy was still centered on strengthening bilateral relations between the United States and its regional allies, and in particular the U.S. – Japan Security Treaty, using U.S. – Japanese cooperation to balance Chinese power in the region. The United States believes that a strong Japan that works together with the United States is important for the new balance of power in the region. A militarily weak Japan will only benefit China.¹⁵

The U.S. forces in Japan together with the U.S. – Japan relationship provide the foundation of U.S. defense policy in the Asia-Pacific region. China has always regarded the U.S. – Japan alliance as a means to dominate Asia and limit its own influence in the region. China regarded the 1997 revisions to the Guidelines for U.S. – Japan Defense Cooperation, as an attempt to contain China and protect Taiwan. However, for Taiwan, it undoubtedly acts as a safeguard to its national security.

In addition, following the end of the Cold War, faced with China’s military expansion and threats, including increasing defense expenditures, acquisitions of modern weapons, nuclear weapons tests, and missile tests in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait, Japan realized that simply increasing defense expenditures would not guarantee its security. In order to protect its security and defense architecture and play a role in multilateral security cooperation, Japan’s core strategy has been to strengthen the U.S. – Japan alliance and enhance cooperation with the United States. This strategy is deterrence against any breach of peace in the region by China or North Korea, and also a protection against the emergence of Chinese hegemony in the region threatening Japan’s national security.

The Taiwan issue has already emerged as a prominent factor in the post-Cold War triangular relationship between China, Japan, and Taiwan. In this triangular relationship, the Taiwan issue involves the mutual interaction between different historical, political, economic, and security factors. In addition, the legal status of the Taiwan issue has altered with the changing

situation in the Asia-Pacific and the fluctuating power of the United States, Japan, and China, affecting the future of the island.

In terms of cross-Strait relations, Japan's position that it is a problem for the "Chinese" to resolve has always been clear. However, Japan does not fully agree that the Taiwan issue is simply a matter of the internal politics of China. Japan argues that if mainland China and Taiwan are unable to peacefully resolve the Taiwan issue, this will have international implications. If cross-Strait conflict threatens peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region, Japan may dispatch Self-Defense Forces to assist military action by U.S. forces in accordance with the U.S. – Japan Security Treaty in order to maintain regional stability and Japan's national security.¹⁶

In 1997 the United States and Japan signed new Guidelines for U.S. – Japan Defense Cooperation. The most significant feature of this agreement was that in the case of situations in the areas surrounding Japan that have a material effect on Japan's peace and security, Japan should quickly adopt appropriate response measures. In order to implement the new Guidelines for U.S. – Japan Defense Cooperation, the Diet passed three related laws, including the Law on Emergencies in Areas Surrounding Japan, "specifically defining" security in the Taiwan Strait as part of the U.S. – Japan security system.

In Taiwan, the "Japan Working Group" (now known as the "Board on Taiwan-Japan Relations") was established under the Presidential Office in 2001. The Working Group was tasked with reviewing important policy with regard to the relationship with Japan. In addition, in 2005, while maintaining the existing Association of East Asia Relations, the "Committee on Japanese Affairs" was also established within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, responsible for the operation of relations with Japan from within the system. In the same year, the director of the Political Warfare Bureau Hu Chen-pu became the first general from Taiwan to visit Japan. The aim of Hu's visit was to study issues surrounding Taiwan-Japan regional security, demonstrating the increasing frequency of military exchanges between the two sides.

Moreover, in August the same year, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) headquarters published the "Proposition on Taiwan's Relations with Japan," emphasizing "Taiwan's subjectivity" and "avoiding thinking based on Chinese feudalism," "reestablishing the historical memory of Taiwan-Japan relations." The main point was that while Taiwan was at odds with China, it has a "shared liberal democratic outlook" with Japan, emphasizing that for Taiwan, the importance of Japan was second only to the United States. Taiwan

therefore regarded Japan as a “potential strategic partner,” and proposed concrete objectives for the future development of Taiwan-Japan relations:

1. Creating a framework for peace in East Asia based on shared values of “freedom, democracy, and human rights” between Taiwan and Japan.
2. Reverse the restrictions in contacts between the governments of Taiwan and Japan after the break in diplomatic relations of 1972, and enhance the level of communication between the two sides.

Following this announcement, Presidential Office Secretary-General Mark Chen, DPP Chair Yu Shyi-kun, and former head of the DPP Department of International Affairs Hsiao Bi-khim led a delegation to Japan. Subsequently the President of the Legislative Yuan Wang Jin-pyng and Kuomintang (KMT) Chair Ma Ying-jeou also visited Japan. In addition, visits were not limited to senior figures. During the same period, Japan’s LDP organized a series of visits to Taiwan under the name “Japan-Taiwan Young Legislators’ Alliance,” showing an expansion in the levels of exchanges. As a result, President Chen Shui-bian proclaimed that relations between Taiwan and Japan were “the best for thirty years.”

After Shinzo Abe returned to the office of prime minister by defeating the Democratic Party in 2012, his foreign policy aimed to correct the imbalance in the alliance between Japan and the United States, and enable Japan to play a more proactive role in foreign relations and regional strategy. Abe’s primary strategy was to accelerate defense reform following the Japanese upper house elections, strengthening national defense and making collective self-defense with the U.S. constitutionally permissible. In addition, Abe applied a “bird’s eye” approach to foreign policy to bring Japan into the international arena, deepening the reliance of the United States on Japan.¹⁷

On October 3, 2013, the United States and Japan convened the 2+2 talks in Tokyo, publishing the document “Toward a More Robust Alliance and Greater Shared Responsibilities.” The document stated that the U.S. – Japan alliance would continue to promote regional security, and encouraged China to adhere to international norms of behavior and improve transparency in its military.¹⁸ Aside from strengthening cooperation between the U.S. military and the Japanese Self-Defense Forces, the document also included the exercise of the right of collective self-defense. More importantly, it responded to China’s rapid expanding military force.

Since the signing of the U.S. – Japan Security Treaty in 1951, although China had attempted to let the United States and Japan change its

geographic coverage to be applied, it has failed to explicitly exclude Taiwan. Therefore, Japan's balancing act with Taiwan that is directed vis-à-vis China has not altered. As long as this continues in the future, this is the best possible outcome for Taiwan.

Conclusion

The effective U.S. – Japan alliance helps the United States maintain a leading role in Asia-Pacific security, given that its Asia-Pacific strategy is anchored on the alliance. Therefore, despite being a legacy of the Cold War confrontation, the alliance has continued therefore. The role of the U.S. – Japan security system in Asia-Pacific regional security has become increasingly important. In 1997, the new Guidelines for U.S. – Japan Defense Cooperation were implemented. Aside from affirming the continued American national interest in the region, the new Guidelines also highlighted the competition between China, the United States, and Japan as the three major powers in the region.

Objectively speaking, Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait occupy an important geopolitical position in the West Pacific. However, their actual strategic value is determined by the overall international environment. As the international environment changes, so does the strategic value of Taiwan.

In the 1990s, the international system entered the so-called post-Cold War period. In military terms, the value of China in the containment strategy against the Soviet Union dropped significantly. In addition, as a result of the 1989 Tiananmen Incident, many Western strategists began to see a powerful China as a security threat to Asia, or even to the world. In this uneasy atmosphere, Taiwan's status as a geopolitical hub became increasingly prominent.

As the security environment in the Asia-Pacific changed, Taiwan's strategic importance has been highlighted again, playing an important part in the joint U.S. – Japan defense against the potential threat from China, benefiting Taiwan's security environment. Therefore, the incorporation of Taiwan into the scope of the Security Treaty should be seen positively. In addition, cross-Strait relations have not been insulated from the Guidelines for U.S. – Japan Defense Cooperation. They have also clearly acted as a considerable constraint on China, otherwise Beijing would not be so concerned about the expansion of the scope of the treaty. In a triangular relationship, two sides together must be larger than the third side. Within this framework, China will not act hastily to

solve the Taiwan issue.

Moreover, during his second term as prime minister, in addition to maintaining a close alliance with the United States, Shinzo Abe has actively pursued to revise the Constitution, with a major focus on Article 9, in order to authorize the roles and missions of the Self-Defense Forces for collective self-defense, placing special emphasis on security issues and “normalization” of Japan’s international status. At the same time, Taiwan-Japan relations have continued to develop based on common values in continuation from the Koizumi era. Both the signing of FTA agreements and high-level visits are beneficial for shaking off China’s constraints. In addition, Abe has clearly hold the view that in Japan’s effort to develop friendly relations with its neighbors in the Asia-Pacific, Taiwan counts. In the Asia-Pacific region, both Taiwan and Japan face similar political and economic contradictions when dealing with China, and have similar foreign relations with the United States. The continued development of bilateral relations can help avoid unbalanced development in the Asia-Pacific region and consolidate security in the Taiwan Strait.

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Biographical note

Kuo-Wen Kuo (gogowin2010@gmail.com) is a Ph.D. Candidate, Graduate Institute of Political Economy, National Cheng Kung University, Tainan, Taiwan. His selected publication is *International Journal of Social Science Studies*.

Hsiang-Yi Yeh (yhy3130@gmail.com) is a Ph.D. Candidate, Graduate Institute of Political Economy, National Cheng Kung University, Tainan, Taiwan. His selected publication is a journal article in *International Journal of Social Science Studies* and a chapter in a book titled *The Taiwan Issues*, edited by Ewa Trojnar published by Księgarnia Akademicka Publishing House in Krakow, 2012.